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INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
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E.O.12356: N/A

TAGS: PREL, MASS, NU

SUBJECT: JANE'S WEEKLY REPORTS US-BASED SECRET CIA  
- TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CONTRAS

1. THE DECEMBER 6, 1986 ISSUE OF JANE'S DEFENCE WEEKLY REPORTS THE STARTING UP OF A SECRET USG MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM, ON U.S. SOIL, FOR NICARAGUAN REBEL FORCES. IT SPECULATES THAT THE TRAINING IS TAKING PLACE AT CAMP PEARY, VIRGINIA, AND SAYS THAT "QUESTIONS HAVE ARISEN" ABOUT THE PROGRAM'S LEGALITY.

2. TEXT OF ARTICLE:

CIA TRAINING CONTRA REBELS IN USA

THE USA HAS BEGUN FORMAL MILITARY TRAINING OF NICARAGUAN REBEL FORCES ON US SOIL IN A RESUMPTION OF DIRECT AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENTS, US  
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ADMINISTRATION SOURCES SAY.

THEY SAID THE OPERATION IS BEING RUN AS A "COVERT PROGRAMME" BY THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY IN THE FIRST KNOWN INVOLVEMENT BY THE CIA AGAINST THE MARXIST SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT SINCE ITS MINING OF TWO NICARAGUAN PACIFIC COAST HARBOURS IN 1984.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS CHARGED WITH OVERALL POLICY FOR THE PROGRAMME AND THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN ASKED TO PROVIDE LOGISTICAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH WOULD COVER TRAINING OPERATIONS.

ACTUAL TRAINING OF THE REBEL FORCES, KNOWN POPULARLY AS CONTRAS, IS BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE US MILITARY AT AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN THE USA AT THE REQUEST OF THE CIA, THE SOURCES SAID, SPEAKING ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED.

A LIKELY TRAINING LOCATION FOR THE START OF THE PROGRAMME IS CAMP PEARY, TECHNICALLY A US ARMY INSTALLATION NEAR HISTORIC WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, THAT IS USED TO TRAIN AGENTS EMPLOYED THE CIA AND OTHER AGENCIES (SIC), ONE SOURCE SAID.

THE TRAINEES INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION, THE MAIN GUERRILLA GROUP, AND MISKITO INDIANS, WHO MAKE UP A SMALLER INSURGENT FORCE, THE SOURCES SAID. THE STATE DEPARTMENT ESTIMATES TOTAL REBEL STRENGTH AT ABOUT 20,000.

THE US ADMINISTRATION BEGAN TRAINING THE CONTRAS AFTER HONDURAS, EL SALVADOR, COSTA RICA AND PANAMA REFUSED  
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TO HAVE THEM TRAINED ON THEIR SOIL, BECAUSE OF FEARS OF NICARAGUAN REPRISALS. ALL BUT PANAMA SHARE A COMMON BORDER WITH NICARAGUA.

MONEY TO PAY FOR TRAINING, TRANSPORTING, HOUSING, FEEDING AND CLOTHING THE REBELS WILL BE TAKEN FROM THE 70 MILLION DOLLARS IN MILITARY AID REQUESTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION AND AUTHORISED BY CONGRESS AT THE END OF THE LAST CONGRESSIONAL SESSION.

IT IS PART OF THE 100 MILLION DOLLAR AID PACKAGE, 27 MILLION DOLLARS OF WHICH IS FOR NON-LETHAL ASSISTANCE SUCH AS MEDICINE AND 3 MILLION DOLLARS FOR MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS. PRESIDENT REAGAN SIGNED THE AID BILL INTO LAW ON 24 OCTOBER. THE LAW ALLOWS THE CIA TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAMME.

TRAINING PERIODS WILL RUN FOR SIX WEEKS FOR 75 REBEL UNIT LEADERS AT A TIME, THE SOURCES SAID. DIFFERENT GROUPS OF 75 EACH MAY BE TRAINED AT DIFFERENT US BASES SINCE THEIR NUMBER IS SO SMALL THERE WILL BE NO NEED TO SET UP A SPECIAL SCHOOL.

EACH GROUP OF TRAINEES IS TO BE BROUGHT INTO THE USA ONE AT A TIME, THE SOURCES SAID.

TRAINING COURSES WILL INVOLVE THE HANDLING OF SMALL WEAPONS, SMALL UNIT TACTICS TAILORED TO COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE, LEADERSHIP AND LESSONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS - MUCH THE SAME TYPE OF TRAINING THE USA PROVIDED FOR SALVADORAN TROOPS BEGINNING IN THE EARLY 1980S, THE SOURCES SAID.

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THE OPERATION IS EXPECTED TO COST MORE THAN ONE  
MILLION DOLLARS AND WILL RUN AS LONG AS THE CONTRA  
LEADERSHIP, IN CONSULTATION WITH US OFFICIALS, WANT TO  
DIVERT MONEY FROM BUYING MUCH-NEEDED WEAPONS TO  
TRAINING ITS TROOPS.

THE SOURCES STRESSED THE TRAINING PROGRAMME WILL  
REMAIN SECRET AND WILL NOT BE ACKNOWLEDGED OFFICIALLY  
BY THE US GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF "LEGAL PROBLEMS THAT  
PREVENT OPENNESS".

THEY DID NOT ELABORATE, BUT QUESTIONS HAVE ARISEN  
ABOUT WHETHER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS MAY BE  
VIOLATING THE US NEUTRALITY ACT IN ASSISTING THE  
CONTRAS. THE LAW MAKES IT ILLEGAL TO PROVIDE SUPPORT  
FOR MILITARY EXPEDITIONS AGAINST COUNTRIES WITH WHICH  
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THE USA IS AT PEACE, BUT THERE ARE DIFFERING  
INTERPRETATIONS OF THAT STATUTE.  
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